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prose fiction. The quality of her criticism is such that one wishes the writer might have included volumes of short tales in her discussion—if it were only to match her “sprightly toad” (p. 5) with the “prudent salamander” of *Plumtre’s Tales* (Vol. II, p. 211). Altogether Dr. Loshe has given us a very clear idea of the formative period of American fiction, all but the actual process of formation.

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BAKER, George Pierce: *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*. New York, 1907. (The Macmillan Company.)

The course of Shakespearean criticism has been for over two centuries one of the most interesting and representative movements in the history of English literature; and its present stage seems likely to be regarded in the future as of special importance. Of books on Shakespeare there is never any end, but it is significant that, among many vagaries and absurdities, the last few years have witnessed so much sane and illuminating criticism; and that, in comparison with nineteenth century criticism, there is now evident a marked change in the point of view and method of approaching Shakespeare’s work. The best of the criticism, it may be noted, has come from the universities and has been based on thorough scholarship. From Oxford came Professor Bradley’s “Shakespearean Tragedy” and Professor Raleigh’s volume in the English Men of Letters Series, and now from Harvard, Professor Baker’s “The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist.” The two English books, brilliant and delightful as they are, can hardly be taken as representative of any new tendencies in criticism. Professor Bradley’s masterly discussion of the tragedies follows in the main the methods of philosophical criticism extending back to Coleridge, and Professor Raleigh makes a notable addition to the impressionistic criticism that dates back to Hazlitt. The historical method, so generally adopted in criticism, has been somewhat tardily applied to Shakespeare, and cannot yet be said to have triumphed. The study of Shakespeare in relation to his own time and environment has, indeed, been extended in many directions, but the results have not yet become determining factors in the critical or popular views of Shakespeare’s genius or accomplishments. Yet, although most teachers and critics prefer to read and ponder over the plays without too much consideration of the Shakespeare of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, no one now altogether neglects the

historical point of view. Professor Raleigh recognizes it, even when he wishes to pass it by. Professor Bradley rarely loses sight of it. Professor Baker's book is a direct contribution to the historical study of Shakespeare, on a very interesting and hitherto strangely neglected side, his development as a playwright.

The first hundred pages of the book are devoted to a summary of our knowledge of the theaters and the stage conditions of Shakespeare's time. On these matters Mr. Baker speaks as an authority, and not only from his knowledge of antiquarian research but also from his experience in various reproductions of Elizabethan plays at Harvard. Yet, one effect of his opening chapter is to suggest how much there remains for research to determine in regard to the Elizabethan theater. The details of the presentation of a play in the Athenian theater are, thanks to an enormous amount of investigation, better known than are those of a London theater in 1600. If the disputed matters of the Greek theater are still numerous enough to stimulate research and debate, our present ignorance of the conditions of Shakespeare's playhouse ought to afford ample opportunity for continued effort on the part of scholars. On the disputed points, Mr. Baker writes suggestively and soundly, but usually prefers to leave his conclusions in the form of questions. He is doubtless right in denying that the Elizabethan stage was altogether ill-equipped, and in insisting on some of the advantages of its conditions, such as the absence of long waits for scene-shifting, and the intimacy which it afforded between actors and audience. But one would hesitate to give the affirmative expected to his final question:—"Is it not evident that for the dramatist, conditions were far better than today, indeed, well-nigh perfect?" (p. 99.) On the contrary, was the play rather than actor or spectacle the thing then more than now? Were there not stars in the days of "Tamburlaine," "Richard III," and "Hamlet"? Does scenery draw off the attention from the play or promote its illusion? Are not moving scenes, women actors, well-lighted theaters, and literate audiences advantages for the dramatist?

The remainder of the book deals with the development of Shakespeare as a dramatist, keeping in view both the ephemeral experimentation in conformity to the conditions of the day, and the permanent principles of dramatic art which his work grew to exemplify. The author's familiarity with both the Elizabethan and the modern theater and drama, is everywhere manifest. His analyses of the plays are shrewd and searching, and his general conclusions well fortified. The tracing of Shakespeare's development must, to be sure, rest upon dubious chronology, and cannot be established with certainty for any phase of his art. Inference

in support of a certain date from the character of the play's technic can hardly be given great weight. Professor Baker, indeed, recognizes that the differences in technic among the early plays are due to the various conditions under which they were written, the nature of their sources, and the progress made by other authors with similar kinds of plays, but he seems inclined at times to base his chronology upon his analysis of plots. One may also occasionally doubt the complete applicability of his dramatic theories. When he says, for example, that "*Romeo and Juliet*" is, except in one detail, perfect tragedy, (p. 275), he means that the failure of Friar John to get the letter to Romeo is due to sheer accident, and so "That turn in the play is at the will of the dramatist, is melodrama, and it breaks the chain of circumstance necessary for perfect tragedy." Now suppose that the incident of the undelivered message had been integrated in some way with the character of Romeo. For instance, Romeo impatient at his absence might have rashly returned to Verona, and thus have missed the messenger through his own folly,—would this really increase the power of the tragedy? The matter is partly one of personal opinion. For me, the undelivered message is a plausible bit of chance, such as is to be expected in life or tragedy, like the accident which ends "*Beauchamp's Career*" or the blind chance which prevents Edmund's message from being in time to save Cordelia. If we are to mark melodrama in "*Romeo and Juliet*" it might be found rather in the unnecessary and unimpressive murder of Paris,—an addition by Shakespeare to Brooke's story, quite in accord with the practice of Elizabethan tragedy. The matter also depends partly on one's theory of dramatic art. For Professor Baker, "Tragedy is a sequence of incidents or episodes so presented as to emphasize with seriousness their causal relationship." While this indicates perhaps the preeminent achievement of Shakespeare's tragedies, the interpretation of incident through character; its strict interpretation would reduce "*Hamlet*" to an inferior rank, and would slight the use of the fantastic, incongruous, and supernatural, common in Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Tragedy, indeed, may not be restricted to the explanation of incident; it may idealize incident and character in order to carry a wealth of suggestiveness; or it may admit and reveal the contradictions and mysteries that environ suffering and ruin in life. Professor Baker's clear-cut and consistent dramaturgy does not always seem just the right instrument for the measure of dramatic power.

He would not, however, propose his definitions as indicating Shakespeare's theories of art. He is, on the contrary, skeptical of the extent of Shakespeare's conscious theories. In the light of

the increasing knowledge of the Elizabethan dramatists and their methods, Shakespeare, the deliberate and prescient artist has become a fallen idol. Professor Raleigh is very emphatic on this point. "There is not a particle of evidence to show that Shakespeare held any views on the theory of the drama, or that the question was a live one in his mind."¹ Professor Baker is much safer in saying: "Nor does it seem to me likely that Shakespeare ever evolved any detailed theory of tragedy." (p. 280,) Detailed theories have rarely been made by dramatists, at least in England. But the book hardly does justice to the amount of dramatic theory, explicit and implicit, of which Shakespeare must have been conscious. There was by 1600 a good deal of discussion of the drama among writers of plays. Not only from the learned Jonson, but in the induction to a popular domestic tragedy, "A Warning for Fair Women," itself written in deliberate violation of the current conventions of tragedy, we find a sufficiently distinct definition of dramatic species. The work of Marlowe and Kyd had in tragedy produced fairly distinct types and had found many imitators. The plays of Seneca still furnished a model and an incentive. If dramatists could not carry out detailed rules in the public theaters, they at least had definite purposes, which, in respect to tragedy, were different from those in respect to comedy, as Marston's Epilog to "Antonio and Mellida" may witness. If there was not much formal or elaborate criticism, there is abundant evidence that the distinction and definition of dramatic species, the recognition both of the popular tradition and the classical theory, and a critical attitude toward their own work and that of others, were shared by Shakespeare's later contemporaries and doubtless by him. Dramatic types were mixed then as now; rules, theories, and traditions often found themselves in conflict with the public demand, but by 1600 Shakespeare was far more conscious of the theories of art than he had been ten years before, and far more aware of the opportunities of the drama, literary and moral as well as theatrical. To all this, Professor Baker would perhaps assent. But a consideration of Shakespeare's art, especially in its later periods, in relation to contemporary dramatic impulses, types and theories, might have resulted in a more complete presentation both of Shakespeare's departures from current practices and of the purposes which governed his varying methods.

Mooted questions aside, the positive merits of the book are manifest. It is the first book to give us a sane and thorough study of Shakespeare as the maker of plays. It supplies us with a comprehensive view of the Elizabethan theater; it shows the

¹ *William Shakespeare*, p. 133.

advantages which that theater offered to dramatists; it constantly stresses the fact that the primary task for Shakespeare, as for his fellow dramatists, was to put a story before his audience; and it traces the development of his art from haphazard presentation of incident to an integration of plot with character. The notable collection of illustrations, the detailed discussion of theatrical practices, and the analyses of both the ephemeral and permanent technical methods must be welcomed by every student of the drama. But the book is by no means for specialists alone. It ought to exercise an important and salutary influence on the general conception and appreciation of Shakespeare's genius and accomplishment.

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